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HUMAN MONOCLONAL ANTIBODIES SPECIFIC FOR
HEPATITIS C VIRUS (HCV) E2 ANTIGEN

Cross-Reference to Related Application

10 This application is a continuation-in-part of
U.S. application Serial No. 08/635,109, filed April 19,
1996, from which priority is claimed pursuant to 35
U.S.C. §120 and which is incorporated herein by reference
in its entirety.

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Technical Field

The present invention relates to compositions derived from immunoglobulin molecules specific for the hepatitis C virus (HCV). More particularly, the
20 invention is related to recombinant human monoclonal antibodies which are capable of specifically binding with HCV E2 antigen.

Background

25 Hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection occurs throughout the world and is the major cause of transfusion-associated hepatitis. There are an estimated 150,000 new cases of HCV infection each year in the United States. The seroprevalence of anti-HCV antibodies
30 in blood donors from around the world has been shown to vary between 0.02 and 1.23%, with rates in some countries as high as about 19%. In addition to being the predominate cause of transfusion-induced hepatitis, HCV is also a common cause of hepatitis in individuals
35 exposed to blood or blood products. Thus, recipients of

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